

Marines Torn in 2 Directions in Viet-Nam

By John T. Wheeler

DANANG, Aug. 4 (AP)—U.S. Marines, schooled to kill under fire, are also under orders in South Viet-Nam to try to win over villagers who, either freely or under duress, harbor the Viet Cong.

The Marines are burdened by their two often irreconcilable objectives, and the Vietnamese women and children sometimes suffer at their hands.

It is a maxim in Viet-Nam that no victory is possible unless the population is won over to the government side. Senior U.S. Army commanders constantly stress this

point but the theory is hard to get down to the squad and platoon level of combat troops.

As more American troops come to Viet-Nam and become more deeply involved in the fighting of the war, the problem of troop relations with the Vietnamese people is expected to arise again and again.

This week Marines teamed with South Vietnamese troops to overrun the Viet Cong-dominated village of Chanson, 10 miles south of Danang. Among 25 persons they killed were a woman and four children.

Two of the children died at the hands of a young Marine who tossed a grenade into a village air-raid shelter and shouted: "Whoosh, I'm a killer today. I got me two Viet Cong."

That was before the children's bodies were found.

Maj. Gen. Lewis W. Walt, commander of the 25,300 U.S. Marines in Viet-Nam, deplored the five deaths.

The General said he had voiced his concern for Vietnamese civilians "again and again to my subordinates and we are taking all possible steps to avoid such occurrences."

In another incident, an officer asked permission to burn several huts as a punitive measure in a village the Viet Cong had used for concealment. He suggested, however, this might cause trouble with the rural pacification officer whose job it is to attempt to win over villagers to the government side.

"Sure, I'm for pacification—five days out of the week," a senior officer said, and gave him permission to burn.

As it turned out, the Marines didn't burn those particular huts, since they did not go back into the village, but many others have been burned.

Elsewhere, Marines have killed water buffalo, chopped down banana trees and taken

chickens and ducks for their own food.

Such acts, particularly the serious ones, are committed by only a few, but they raise questions in the American military establishment as the tremendous troop buildup is under way to help the faltering Vietnamese stem the Viet Cong tide.

Senior Marine officers at headquarters here are acutely aware of the problem. One, who has studied guerrilla war from Communist textbooks, said recently:

"For the first time we're faced with a war that is 80 per cent political and 20 per cent conventional military. But when a man in the line is getting shot at, he is prone to consider the war to be 100 per cent military."

The Viet-Cong are under rigid discipline in regard to conduct with the population, which they like to describe as "water for the guerrilla fish to swim in." Political commissars are with every unit to enforce the discipline.

No such system exists in the American military, which is steeped in traditions that make political control over troops heresy.

U.S. Army officers concede that problems between the Marines and civil population are probably due to the fact the Marines were the first combat men assigned to Viet-Nam and the first to mix with villagers.

The Marines have carried out attempts in the pacification field. Villages occupied by the Marines enjoy American medical treatment and Marines hand out rations and candy.

The breakdown in applying the theory of "winning the hearts and minds of the people" usually comes when Marines charge a village that their commanders have labeled as Viet Cong-dominated. The troops feel that all those they run across are enemies dedicated to their destruction.

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Soviet Soldiers Firing Love Letters Broadside

MOSCOW, Aug. 4 (UPI). There is no place for "love by correspondence" in the Soviet army and navy, the newspaper

whose name is Viktor," or "the fellow with blue eyes." "Girls," the newspaper said, "where is your pride?"